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Panel Discussions

NUMBER 5

Featuring:

Dr. Samuel H. Sutherland

PRESIDENT, BIBLE INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES, Inc.

Dr. Charles L. Feinberg

DIRECTOR, TALBOT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dr. Oran H. Smith

DEAN OF STUDENTS AND
DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS, BIOLA

as featured over

THE BIBLE INSTITUTE HOUR
Los Angeles 17, Calif.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS NO. 5



Question:

"Is it possible for a Christian to commit suicide and still be saved?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

When one does not fully understand what it means to be saved, what it means to be a child of God, what it means to be kept in the hollow of His hand, he can certainly go astray on many issues, such as this one. If a person has been saved by the grace of God, he is saved for all eternity. God's eternal life is imparted to him when he becomes a Christian. Now anything can happen to a person who is out of fellowship with God, just as anything can happen to a wayward child. I do not know of many incidents of Christians committing suicide unless because of some mental illness. In these cases it certainly does not indicate that this person is no longer saved.

Question:

"Could you please explain how prayer is to be offered? I heard a preacher once say unless prayers are offered in Jesus' name they'll not be heard. This doesn't seem right to me for I know many fine people who pray to God."

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

There are many ways by which prayer may be offered. The important thing is not the verbal phraseology, but rather the heart condition and attitude. The Scripture expressly states, however, that prayer should be offered in Jesus' name. It is commanded in Scripture that we should pray in the name of our Lord. Of this there is no question: all prayers are heard. The members of the Godhead are not jealous so they will not be peevish about the verbal usage that is employed. The Bible tells us that the ears of the Lord are open to the prayers of the righteous. But the basis of our acceptance with God — and that includes our prayers — is the redemptive work of Christ.

Question:

"Can you please tell me where in the Bible we're told that the wicked will burn forever? Some people have come to my door and when I tell them this, they just laugh. They say the wicked will be destroyed."

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

There are passages which indicate that the wicked will be destroyed. These passages, however, are in the sense of not enjoying eternal life but rather enduring eternal torment. In Rev. 20:10 we have the scriptural basis for eternal punishment. It is connected with the lake of fire. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." The beast and the false prophet are there; Satan is there, and all the unsaved are there. The Scriptures are very clear that these are tormented day and night for ever and ever. The destruction mentioned certainly cannot be annihilation.

Question:

"Could you define from the original the meaning of the words 'perish' and 'destroy'? Are these words in any way connected with the thought of annihilation?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

No. Sometimes the word "destroy" in itself may mean that you put a thing out of existence. Of course, science even teaches us that there is no such thing as the destructibility of matter. It is one of the basic precepts of science. Anything that is brought into the world has to exist in one form or another, and that is certainly true, according to the scripture, of every human soul. The spirit of that human soul cannot be annihilated in the sense of going out of existence or suffering extinction. We have this microphone before us. We could destroy it, but that wouldn't mean all the component parts were done away; that they were annihilated. They would simply exist in a different form. When we talk about the destruction of a personality by death we mean the separation of the immaterial from the material part of the man. But this does not mean that

those component parts do not exist separately. The unsaved will have a body but it is never called a resurrection body unto life.

Question:

"Is it wrong for a Christian to wear jewelry?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

I believe it is wrong for a Christian to wear jewelry if this is the only adornment he or she has. God's Word enjoins Christian people to let the adorning be "not the outward adornment" but the hidden man of the heart. Sometimes people try to attract attention to themselves by putting on all sorts of ornaments. If we're going to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, however, we will be adorning the gospel by our godly lives and letting our light shine for Him. If we're doing that, I don't see anything wrong with wearing jewelry. Let us remember, however, adornment can become an idol just like anything else, or take the place of something more important.

Question:

"Why do some preachers say 'if the Lord delay His coming?' Doesn't scripture say that he will come and not tarry?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

I personally do not use that phrase, "If the Lord delay His coming." I believe that God knows exactly when the Lord Jesus Christ is going to come again. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has everything well in hand so far as His plans are concerned. I think what these preachers mean when they say, "If the Lord delay His coming," is that purpose of getting the last member of the body of Christ saved. If we fail to do our part in evangelizing, from a human point of view, we fail to bring in the last member of the body of Christ before the Lord can come. In that broad sense we are delaying the Lord's coming. We do not feel, however, that the Lord is going to delay His coming. Already this dispensation has been the longest of any of the dispensations which are taught in the Scriptures. "He is not willing that any should perish."

Question:

"I've always been taught that the Bible teaches separation, so I'm troubled about belonging to what would be termed a 'modernistic' church. Should I stay with this church and try to influence my friends in it or go where I can be fed the Word of God?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Separation is to be understood in more than one way; separation from the world, from every appearance of evil, from all that displeases the Lord (I Thess. 5). We are to avoid all appearances of evil. The Bible also teaches separation from doctrinal errors. In 2nd John 10 we have this word. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither biddeth him God speed." This doctrine is the primacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, His deity, his incarnation in the flesh. That's certainly separation. And John continues in verse 11: "For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

II Cor. 6:14-18 teaches that we are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. That means not only in marriage but in every other way, even in the house of God, where men are carrying on what looks like the work of God.

This questioner also says, "I'm troubled about belonging to what would be called a 'modernistic' church." I think the important phrase there is "I am troubled." Friend, if you're troubled about an association and you're not at peace, doubtless the spirit of God is talking to you about your relationship in this place. It just remains to decide whether it is better to try to stay there to influence your friends, or to go where you can be fed on the Word. I can speak from personal experience and the experience of others, God does expect us first of all to be fed on the Word itself. Let's not be divisive just for division's sake. Let's not be unduly critical just to be critical.

Question:

"Why does it say in John 9:39 that some should be made 'blind'?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

When one does not walk in the light that God gives him, blindness follows. The poet has said, "Light increaseth bringeth light. Light resisteth bringeth night. Who can give us power to choose if we the love of light shall lose?" That is a scriptural principle. It runs throughout God's Word. Whenever God speaks and people walk in obedience to His voice further light is given, that they may walk more perfectly before the Lord. On the other hand, when God speaks and disobedience follows, blindness is the result. I believe you have that very clearly set forth in the first chapter of Romans. Wherever there has been a rebellion against the Lord or disobedience to His Word, blindness follows.

Question:

"I am disturbed by recent discoveries of so-called 'missing links.' Can you help to explain them? They seem so convincing."

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

I appreciate the fact that the writer put in the phrase, "so-called missing links." For certainly that is just what they are, "so-called missing links." Let's just wait until all of the facts are in. You will recall that for year and years the Piltdown man was considered one of the great arguments for the theory of evolution. Only within the last few years it has been disclosed that the theories were false and based upon fragmentary and imaginary "evidence." When all of the facts are in, we can rest assured that science and the Word of God will be absolutely agreed, and their findings will conform. There is no argument between true science and the Bible.

Question:

"In Genesis 1:28, why is the word 'replenish' used? Doesn't this command to Adam and Eve suggest other races on the earth before them?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

Some Bible teachers hold that this does indicate some kind of life upon the earth before Adam and Eve. In the Hebrew,

however, the word does not necessarily mean that there was life previously, but that Adam and Eve were to "fill up" the earth. It so happens that in 17th century English, the word "replenish" does not mean "fill up again." It meant "fill" in the first place. If you will look up English usage at that time, you will find that it is a correct translation of the Hebrew word. The context itself has to indicate whether the word means "fill for the first time," or to "fill on a subsequent occasion."

Question:

"Please explain what you mean when you say 'Biola,' or is it 'Viola' with a 'V'?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

"BIOLA" stands for the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Inc. This is the corporate name of the four schools here at BIOLA: The Bible Institute, the BIOLA College, the Talbot Theological Seminary, and the School of Missionary Medicine. All of them are referred to as BIOLA, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Inc. The first letter of each word in the corporate name makes the composite word "BIOLA."

Question:

"Can you please tell me what is the 'flying roll,' described in Zechariah 5:1, 3? Could these be our modern flying saucers? Do you believe in flying saucers, and if not how do you explain them?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

The "flying roll" was an open roll as we see a manuscript unrolled; it was flying in mid air. It represented the ten commandments, as you will see if you will read through the 4th verse of the 5th chapter of Zechariah. That "flying roll" was a representation of the manner in which the law was coming to exact the penalty upon those who had violated its distinct precepts. Could these be our modern flying saucers? Absolutely not. The Scripture indicated that it was the curse related to the infraction of the ten commandments. Our United States scientists and military men have been doing a great deal of research

on flying saucers. They now have the whole subject divided in this fashion: some of them are optical illusions; some of them are phenomena in the heavens which appear to be flying saucers; some are still unidentified. I believe it is too early to say anything dogmatic concerning them.

Question:

"I have heard some people say that the colored race descended from Noah. This must be, but how did they get their color?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Undoubtedly the colored nation or colored race, along with all other races, came from Noah. In Genesis 9:18, 19 it is so clear that it is beyond controversy. No anthropologist I know of can explain the various colors of man. Some would explain it entirely on the basis of geography and climate. These people were in certain areas where the climate was conducive to this particular coloring; but why this special type, they are not able to say. Instead of speculation, let's wait until facts are clearly given or until God Himself chooses to reveal them to us. But that they come from Noah is clearly shown in Scripture.

Question:

"If God is only a spirit, how will He be seen in heaven?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

Many Bible teachers believe that God the Father will never be seen as such in heaven, but that He will always be seen in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Regardless of that particular idea, we will have spiritual eyesight the like of which we do not possess down here. We have physical eyesight down here so that we can only see physical objects. When we receive our spiritual eyesight with our resurrection bodies, then we will be able to see spiritual objects. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Question:

"Please explain the work of the Nicolaitanes. (Rev. 2:15) Is there such in our present day churches?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

Revelation 2:14 will give us a good indication of the meaning. The message is being sent to the church in Pergamos. "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." There are those who believe the Nicolaitanes were holding the doctrine of Balaam. But the very next verse says, "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate." So there must be some difference between the Nicolaitanes and those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam, as you recall, is one who led God's people astray and was hired to curse Israel. The word *Nicolaitanes* means "to overcome people" or "to swallow up." It is believed that the Nicolaitanes were a priestly class of people who perverted the gospel. It is further thought that Peter is referring to them in his Second Epistle, verse 10.

Question:

"Just what is the specific sin for which we are told not to pray? Also, in I John 5:16, what is the sin unto death?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

The sin for which we are told not to pray is called "the sin unto death." I John 5:16, 17 "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." Believers when they are saved do not have the old nature removed, but have added the new nature, the nature born of God. That old nature continues to bring forth sin and all sin is unrighteousness. But not all sin of a believer — he's speaking here of brethren — not all sin of a brother is called a sin unto death. A sin unto death is a sin where the believer knows all of the issues involved; he

knows what the will of God is; he determinedly opposes the will of God. We have a clear case of that kind with regard to Ananias and Sapphira. When we were saved we were made immediately fit for Heaven. We are left on earth to serve God, to glorify Him, to win souls to our Lord Jesus. When we are dimetrically opposed to what God has left us here for, God says, "I will take you home." That is exactly the sin unto death. It is a sin of willful disobedience. Not just any sin of willful disobedience, but one that is persisted in until the individual believer is no longer useful for the purposes of the Lord.

Question:

"What became of the Old Testament saints which arose when Christ arose?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

They ascended with Him to heaven and are now with Him in glory. They had been occupying the abode of the righteous dead known in general as *Sheol* in the Old Testament and *Hades* in the New Testament. *Gehenna*, the abode of the unrighteous dead throughout all eternity, is not at present occupied. It is the same as "the lake of fire and brimstone." The abode of the dead was evidently divided into two parts: the abode of the righteous dead and the abode of the unrighteous dead. When our Lord ascended, he "led captivity captive." We believe, of course, that those who had been held as captives in the abode of the righteous dead, awaiting this great event were released by the Lord and were led as His captives, which is a glorious liberty indeed, up into glory. They are the spirits of the righteous saints who are with the Lord Jesus Christ in glory at this time.

Question:

"My husband objects to my bowing my head in silent grace when we go out to a restaurant to eat. He is not a Christian and says that this embarrasses him and only draws attention to myself. Should I just say 'thank you' in my heart?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

We need to be sensitive to God's leading in such matters. No blanket rule can be made on a thing of this kind. Certainly no one needs to be ashamed of giving thanks to God for the provision that He has made for us. But if this sort of thing is irking this woman's husband whom she is trying to win to Christ I think to say "thank you" in the heart would be most acceptable. This wouldn't be because we are ashamed to bear public witness by acknowledging our thankfulness to the Lord.

Question:

"What is the importance of the number seven in scripture? Don't you think that studying such things would tend to dangerous doctrines?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Seven in Scripture does have an importance. It indicates a complete unit of unity, just as we have the seven days of creation. Whether you take them to be twenty-four hour periods, there are seven of them. No one can read with any degree of perception the wonderful, glorious book of the Revelation without seeing the series of sevens: seven benedictions, seven churches, seven lampstands, the series of seven judgments (whether it be in the seals, the trumpets, or the vials of gold). If you study the Bible, however, just from the angle of numerology, you are not getting much farther than just mathematics. The Bible has a spiritual message! It's from God who is Spirit. Our Lord's full purpose is a redemptive one that will ultimately issue to His glory. Use all of the study of numbers just to indicate spiritual truth when it is clearly indicated.

Question:

"Is there any kind of meat which shouldn't be eaten today?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

Although there were certain types of meat that were forbidden in the Old Testament times, there is no type of meat which is forbidden today from that same point of view. All we need today is to make certain that the meat is clean, and that it does not carry any germs. There is not any meat that should not be eaten today from a ceremonial or religious point of view.

Question:

"Is it right to use some of our tithe for charity? Some say it is not. I personally have felt that my money should go to missionary work."

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

The safest way is to use the tithe for the work of God. There are many charities that are demanding help and rightly so! They are all very, very worthy. But if we answer all of these calls with our tithes, then how will the work of God go on? Christian schools like BIOLA, your own church, and missionaries on the field to whom you have solemnly promised to hold the ropes need the faithfulness of God's stewards. The world takes care of its own; do Christians? The world does not support institutions such as BIOLA and other worthwhile Christian evangelical organizations, nor does the world support the church. It is up to Christians to keep the church active.

Question:

"Should a Christian couple still honor and obey their parents?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

On the basis of the answer to this question, many homes are either kept intact or divided. See Exodus 20:12, "Honor thy father and thy mother." A Christian couple should honor their parents at all times. When they were young, they should have honored them. Now, when they have set up their own home, they should still honor their parents. I can conceive of no situation in which a Christian couple is justified in not honoring their parents. Now the matter of obeying is different. You will remember Genesis 2:24 tells us that a man should forsake his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. There is a wonderful relationship between parents and children. But when marriage enters in, there is even a more intimate relationship set up and that is between the husband and wife. Genesis 2:24 is prior to Exodus 20:12.

Question:

"Is it wrong to dye your hair? Where is this found in the Bible?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

There is no verse to my knowledge that has to do with the dyeing of hair. We do know that styles and customs change. I remember many years ago when it was considered a sin for women to cut their hair. I think we have come to the place where we realize that there are many earnest Christian women who have cut their hair and who wear it short in these days. It certainly does not need to effect one's spirituality. While we certainly do not feel that dyeing of hair and cutting of hair are necessary, yet we would give liberty and not break fellowship with the one who did it.

Question:

"Will we go directly to heaven when we die?"

Answer by Dr. Sutherland:

For the Christian, the true, born-again child of God, we believe that he goes directly to heaven when he dies. "To depart and be with Christ, is far better," said Paul. We do not hold at all to the idea that you go into an unconscious soul-sleep until the time of the resurrection. Our bodies go into the grave, but our souls go to heaven.

Question:

"How do we know that Satan, the devil, and Lucifer are the same person?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

In the 20th chapter of the book of the Revelation and the second verse we read, "an angel came down from heaven and he laid hold on the dragon," connecting it with the expression in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, "that old Serpent," also connecting it with the serpent of antiquity in the third chapter of Genesis — notice how many chapters are united here — "which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." So from Revelation 20 alone we know that Satan and the Devil are exactly the same personality. Lucifer is a translation of two Latin words meaning "lightbearer." It is a translation of an expression in Isaiah 14:14. Here we learn of a spirit being who was of great prominence, wisdom, and beauty. He

was endowed by God in a marvelous way, but he turned against the Lord. From that we equate Lucifer with the fallen angel, Satan. Lucifer became Satan and the devil, the opposing one and the one who is the adversary.

Question:

"What should a Christian's attitude be towards war? Doesn't the Bible say, 'Thou shalt not kill?'"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

Yes, the Bible does say, "Thou shalt not kill." A Christian is certainly not a warmonger. This means literally, "Thou shalt not commit murder." Now we must distinguish between killing as an act of murder and as an act of punishment. While the Word of God does certainly command us to abstain from murder, there are times when men must be punished. Then I think that we should recognize that war is not only a matter of taking life, but also a matter of preserving life. Many times thousands of lives can be saved through the intervention of war.

Question:

"Does BIOLA believe in capital punishment?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Yes, we do and the reason is simply because the Bible teaches it. A lot of emotion enters here but we are always on the only proper ground when we are going exactly according to the Word. Genesis 9:5, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Now that word is explicit enough that anyone who sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Romans 13:1 indicates, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is not power but of God: the powers that be ordained of God." Verse four speaks of constituted authority in society. "For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain." The sword here speaks of any means of taking life, any means of

capital punishment. The crimes that go on do not do so because of Genesis 9 and Romans 13. Little do we know how much more murder there would be if there was not capital punishment.

Question:

"Please explain I Timothy 1:20 and II Timothy 2:17. Did Paul have actual power to deliver these men over to Satan? Were these men born-again Christians who fell from grace?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

I Timothy 1:20, "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." II Timothy 2:17, "And their word will eat as doth a canker (a gangrene): of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." These passages have to be taken in conjunction with I Corinthians 5:5 where the case of terrible immortality is mentioned. The Apostle Paul indicates that the congregation there is to deliver over that individual, that offending one, unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, Paul actually did have the power to deliver these men over to Satan. This stems from apostolic power which is not operative today. No one, and no church, can today deliver over an individual to Satan. No, these men were not born again. They did not fall from grace. They overthrew the faith of some. They themselves were unsaved men because we read that they blasphemed. That is not indicative of believers.

Question:

"What does the term 'backslider' really mean? Can there be those today like that and is the word 'backslider' in the Word of God?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Yes, it is definitely in the Word of God. It is found in a number of passages of Jeremiah and Hosea, Jeremiah 3:6, 8 for instance. There are certainly people like that today. The mean-

ing of the term is that it is a condition of one who has known fellowship with the Lord, who has been in obedience, who has been trusting the Lord, and then turns back. Something has come between him and the Lord. It's a sad fact, but we see it on every hand, and our churches are filled with folk who once were warm toward the truth, but have somehow grown cold. They have allowed things of this world to creep in. They have allowed so many of the cares, and trials, and troubles of the world to dim the vision of the Lord Jesus that they are in a backslidden condition. They need reviving. They do not need to be born over again, but they do need reviving.

Question:

"Please explain John 15 where it speaks of the branches being cut off and burned. If these are non-Christians, how did they get on the tree in the first place? Doesn't it show that they once belonged to Christ?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

John 15 is referring to Christians. The cutting off of the branches does not refer to the sending of the lost to perdition. The Lord is speaking of fruit-bearing here. Just as the branch not bearing fruit is broken off, so Christian people are often put aside because of the fruitlessness of their lives. Notice also in this 15th chapter of John that it is *men* who "gather the branches and cast them into the fire and they are burned." It is not the Lord that casts them into the fire. Men will put us aside. We are justified in the sight of God by faith but we are justified in the sight of men by our works. Notice the statement is given very clearly that "herein is my Father glorified that ye bear *much fruit*." Not just the fruit or more fruit, but much fruit. It's the "bumper crop" that pleases God.

Question:

"We have a new pastor who declares that the gospels are not for us, only the epistles. Is this true?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

I think I would keep my eye on that new pastor! This is just the same as saying that the Old Testament isn't for us. It is whittling the Word of God down to only the epistles. II Tim-

othy 3:16, 17 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good works," I believe the "all scripture" there refers to the entire Bible. It is true that not all scripture has been directed to us, but it is definitely for our spiritual edification.

Question:

"Are our loved ones who died knowing Christ in the same heaven that we will occupy when Christ calls the church home?"

Answer by Dr. Feinberg:

Thank God, the answer to that is a very, very strong affirmative, yes. Loved ones who have gone on before, knowing the Saviour, are in the very same heaven now; they are in the third heaven that we're going to occupy when Christ calls the church home. Your proof is in II Corinthians 5 and I Thessalonians 4. There is just one third heaven where God is, where the Holy Spirit is, and where all the redeemed will be.

Question:

"My pastor says that Job is the oldest book in the Bible? Now, if that's so, doesn't it mean that there were people, Job and his family perhaps, on the earth before Adam and Eve?"

Answer by Dr. Smith:

Well, perhaps there has been a little misunderstanding here. It is commonly believed that Job is the oldest recorded book of the Bible. We do not know at what exact period of time the experiences in the book of Job occurred, but they certainly didn't occur before the time of Adam and Eve. We must remember that the books of the Bible are not given in chronological order, but rather in these three divisions: the books of the law, the books of the prophets, and the writings. The books of the New Testament are not recorded chronologically either. They are given to us or set forth according to their subject matter; the gospel records, the historical records, the messages to the churches, the practical epistles, and the Revelation — not in the order in which they were written.

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